

Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Blasphemy Against the Spirit Is Not Forgiven

³¹ And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Q1. ***Every sin and blasphemy***: What is “blasphemy”?

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-  **Definition:** blasphemy (blās'fā-mē)
- 1.a. Contemptuous or profane speech or action concerning God or a sacred entity.
 - 1.b. An instance of this.
 - 2.a. Irreverent or impious action or expression in regard to something considered inviolable or sacrosanct.
 - 2.b. An instance of this.

Q2. ***Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven***: While the Pharisees – in their arrogant righteousness – accused Jesus of conspiring with Satan to heal people with severe disabilities, they were actually “*blaspheming*” against Christ Jesus, the Creator ([John 1:3](#)), the Messiah, the Son of God. How can this be “*forgiven*”?

Isaiah 1:18 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

[“*Deep red cloth*” is interpreted as sins that are the most horrible, egregious ever committed, yet they can “*be as white as snow*” or forgiven.]

The Lord says, “Come, we will talk these things over. Your sins are red like deep red cloth. But they can be as white as snow. Your sins are bright red. But you can be white like wool.

1 John 1:9 [NIV-1984]

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 5:20-21 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more

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and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Q3. *Anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come:* What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

Ephesians 1:13-14 [NIV-1984]

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Romans 8:26-27 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

²⁶ And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers [or God's holy people] in harmony with God's own will.



This commentator has a boyhood picture of the Holy Spirit sitting on one shoulder and a demon sitting on the other (perhaps, from Saturday morning television cartoons I watched as a boy). The Spirit whispers encouraging ethical, moral choices into our consciences ([Romans 2:15](#)). While the demon is raucous and crude, always demanding and ever tempting us to make bad, irreverent, immoral choices.

We are given a free-will to accept or reject good over evil. Many, many people will also hear the Gospel message. And the people who hear are given the choice to accept or reject the message of salvation through belief in Christ Jesus. God wants us to freely choose Him! That is love — freely given, freely chosen. While He wants us to choose Him, He will not force Himself upon us — 'force' is not love, 'force' never causes love to form.

So, the Holy Spirit patiently waits — always waiting, always listening — for a much-loved person ([John 3:16](#)) to declare his or her belief in the saving grace of the Lord Jesus ([Romans 10:8-13](#)) and to confess/repent of committed sin. When a person makes that momentous declaration of belief and confession, the Holy Spirit checks the person's heart for true motive and then indwells (joins with) the person's soul marking/sealing the person's soul as a Believer for all eternity ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). The Holy Spirit communicates that decision into Heaven, so that the person's decision is written in the books ([Revelation 20:12^d](#)) and the best part — "*I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*" ([Luke 15:7](#)) — A celebration in Heaven! Over your decision to believe!

Throughout our lives (Believers and nonbelievers, alike) the indwelling Holy Spirit listens for prayers and will intercede on our behalf. He takes our incoherent words, our half-formed thoughts, our anguish, our joy, our thankfulness, our whispered pleas, our worship, and communicates that to God with appropriate emphasis and groans *according to God's will* ([Romans 8:26-27](#)). The Holy Spirit is an Intercessor — a go-between, if you will allow the thought.

The Holy Spirit is also a gentleman. He will leave if asked. If someone curses or denigrates or blasphemes or repulses the Holy Spirit directly, the Spirit may allow the first several instances; however, a time will come, probably sooner rather than later, when the Holy Spirit recognizes that the person's heart/soul has become so hardened it is futile to wait, and . . . He leaves. If He is no longer waiting and listening, the person is lost. The translucent veil ([2 Corinthians 3:14-16](#)) that allowed Light ([John 1:4-5](#)) to filter through, becomes opaque/black. No one in Heaven will ever hear a plea from the lost soul.

The Pharisees equated Jesus with Satan — they were so angry that they were using any accusation to discredit Him. It was especially cruel when they said that Jesus was using Satan's power to heal people. The hypocrisy! The Jews themselves performed exorcisms. In their warped minds, since their exorcisms were performed by them, it was

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done by the power of God; whereas, they accused Jesus of performing exorcisms by the power of Satan. “Good for me; evil for thee!” The hypocrisy! The two-faced words! The hatred! Their eternal loss . . . our gain.

Q4. ***Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven:*** Why is “blasphemy” against the Holy Spirit unforgiveable, while “blasphemy” against Jesus is forgivable?

Day 2

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

A Tree Is Known By its Fruit

³³ "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

Q5. What does a master gardener do? (Compared to someone like me who even forgets to water the plants)

Q6. How is God like a master gardener?

John 15:1-4 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

¹ “I am the true vine; my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. And he trims and cleans every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can produce fruit alone. It must remain in the vine. It is the same with you. You cannot produce fruit alone. You must remain in me.

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³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Q7. *You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good:* Is this an indictment (an accusation)? If yes, who is accused? And who is the accuser?

Accusation? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

Who is accused?

Who is the accuser?

Genesis 3:13-14 [NIV-1984]

¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life."

Q8. *You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good:* Jesus declared the Pharisees a "brood of vipers". ① What was their poisonous venom? ② What did the Lord want them to examine, to do, as a result of His accusation?

① What was their poisonous venom?

② What did the Lord want them to examine, to do?

Acts 28:1-6 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

[As the Apostle Paul was shipped as a roman prisoner from Jerusalem to Rome for imprisonment and trial, they sailed across the Adriatic Sea. They encountered a terrible storm and shipwrecked, and came ashore on the Island of Malta.]

¹ When we were safe on land, we learned that the island was called Malta. ² It was raining and very cold. But the people who lived there were very good to us. They made us a fire and welcomed all of us.

³ Paul gathered a pile of sticks for the fire. He was putting them on the fire when a poisonous snake came out because of the heat and bit him on the hand. ⁴ The people living on the island saw the snake hanging from Paul's hand. They said to each other, "This man must be a murderer! He did not die in the sea, but [their idol-god of] Justice does not want him to live."

⁵ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire. He was not hurt. ⁶ The people thought that Paul would swell up or fall down dead. The people waited and watched him for a long time, but nothing bad happened to him. So, they changed their minds about Paul. Now they said, "He is a god!"

Romans 3:10-18 [NIV-1984]

¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know."

¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

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James 3:5-8 [NIV-1984]

⁵ Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Q9. *For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks:* ① Can a person who is filled with evil speak good things? ② Can a person who is filled with evil “Confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead” ([Romans 10:9](#)) ?

① Speak good things? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

② “Confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe”? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

James 2:19, 26 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

¹⁹ You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. . . .

²⁶ Just as the body is dead without breath [footnote: or *without spirit*] so also faith is dead without good works.

Q10. *You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good:* If a nonbeliever performs good deeds, admirable charity, and encouraging words that build-up, will that person earn his or her way into Heaven?

Yes? Maybe? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Ephesians 2:8-9 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

[Also [Titus 3:5](#); [Galatians 2:16](#); and [Romans 3:20](#)]

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

 In two verses Christ Jesus will declare that we will have to give account for every careless word we have ever spoken ([Matthew 12:36](#)).

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Day 3

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³⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

Q11. (**Personal** not to be discussed in a group) *The good man brings good things . . . the evil man brings evil things:* Examine yourself. Is it your nature to speak ill of someone, or to gossip about someone? Is it your nature to say disrespectful things to wait-staff, or store clerks, or cashiers? Are you easily angered? Do you rage occasionally when driving?

Yes? Sometimes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

How can I do better?

³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Q12. (Verses 36 & 37) How do you – the Bible student – interpret these words of Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:10 [NIV-1984]

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Romans 14:10 [NIV-1984]

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

 The Judgment Seat of Christ is sometimes referred to as the *Bēma* (βῆμα) *Seat*, which is a Greek term for a raised platform or step where judges sat to evaluate athletic performances or render official verdicts. [©2026 Google. Summary provided by Google AI. Keywords: "Bible verse: Bema seat?" Retrieved: 2026-08-28.]

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Q13. (Verses 36 & 37) These StudySheets/Lessons have frequently referenced the Great White Throne Judgment of [Revelation 20](#). ① Do we know what final punishment nonbelievers will experience? ② Do we know what final punishment Believers will experience?

① Nonbelievers?

② Believers?

The Sign of the Prophet Jonah

³⁸Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, "Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you."

Q14. (Speculation) *Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you:* While the Pharisees and teachers of the law courteously addressed Jesus as "Teacher", what motive was behind their demand to see another miracle?

 The commentators at GotQuestionsMinistries provided this insight:

"In the previous section, Jesus harshly condemned the Pharisees who accused Him of using Satan's power to cast out demons. He called them a brood of vipers and talked about the evil in them that came out in the words they spoke. He warned them of His coming judgment ([Matthew 12:24-37](#)).

"It's not clear if the passage beginning here is a direct continuation of those prior conversations. It might have taken place at another time. In either case, certain scribes and Pharisees respectfully address Jesus as 'Teacher'. Then they tell Jesus that they wish to see a sign from Him. Some commentators believe this group of religious leaders was trying to set Jesus up for another accusation about His power. Demanding miraculous credentials was not an uncommon response to Jesus' actions ([John 2:18-19](#)).

"If we suppose this group of skeptics is being sincere, this request is puzzling. Jesus has already performed countless signs by healing, raising the dead, and casting out demons. Pharisees had been present for several of those, at least. If this is a continuation of prior conversation, Jesus had — only moments before — removed a demon from a blind and mute man. Why ask for yet another sign?

"The most likely answer is that the Pharisees were not being sincere. They were scrambling for any way to ignore the clear evidence in front of them. Though Jesus has provided miracles, they demand something else. Of course, even when a miracle is undeniable, they are likely to reject it, anyway ([Matthew 12:24](#)). They certainly want to seem sincere, as if they are being open-minded and willing to consider evidence.

"In truth, they're telling Christ 'We will decide what counts as evidence, and what does not. No matter how potent a sign is, we won't believe unless it fits our criteria'. That's an all-too-common attitude in modern skeptics, as well. Unbelievers in the modern world, just as much as the Pharisees, tend to summarily dismiss all existing evidence, and then demand even more — all the while acting as if such a request is entirely reasonable.

"Whatever specific sign these Pharisees are looking for, Jesus will refuse to give it to them. Not because He couldn't provide it, but because it would be a waste of time ([Matthew 7:6](#))."

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- Q15. **Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you:** Some nonbelievers today argue or proclaim that the miracles Jesus performed were somehow tainted, or not enough, or simply fiction. Like the Pharisees, would there ever be enough miracles of sufficient grandeur to convince some nonbelievers?

Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 3:19 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say, “He traps the wise in the snare of their own cleverness.”

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 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

³⁹ He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Q16. **A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign:** To whom is Jesus referencing?
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Romans 1:18–20 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

¹⁸ But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. ¹⁹ They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰ For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God.

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 The word ‘wicked’ is one of Satan’s attributes, which society (Satan) is slowly evolving to mean good. This commentator checked synonyms for wicked and received five choices: “good, great, terrific, cool, [and] fabulous” [Microsoft Word, 2024 version, context menu, synonyms]. For this commentator ‘wicked’ will always be synonymous with evil (meaning bad, immoral, cruel, inhumane, barbaric, Hitler, Stalin, etc.).

Q17. (Verses 39-40) ***But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah:*** From these verses, what is “the sign of the prophet Jonah”?

Q18. ***The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:*** Is Jesus prophesying about some event(s) future to Him? If yes, what event(s)? (Hints: the events are like two slices of bread forming a sandwich, with the filling consisting of “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”.)

Yes? No? If yes, what event(s)?

<u>C</u>	<u>R</u>	<u> </u>	<u>C</u>	<u> </u>	<u>F</u>	<u> </u>	<u>X</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>N</u>	T H E N
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Q19. ***The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:*** When Jesus walked the earth, what was the custom for counting days? (Hint: We recognize that Jesus’s crucifixion occurred on Good Friday, and celebrate His resurrection on Easter Sunday.)

General thoughts?

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Q20. ***The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:*** ① What do you think Jesus meant with the words “in the heart of the earth”? ② Who generally ‘owns’ “the heart of the earth”?

① What did Jesus mean?

② Who generally ‘owns’

Q21. ***The Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth:*** When Satan heard Jesus’s words, ① do you think he understood what Jesus meant? ② Could Satan prevent Jesus from entering Hell? ③ What do you think Jesus did when He was “in the heart of the earth”?

① Did Satan understand? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

② Could Satan stop Jesus from entering Hell? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

③ What did Jesus do “in the heart”?

 If you are interested in the Study of Jonah, please click on the [StudySheet/Lesson #1 for Jonah 1:1-17](#). When this

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commentator looks at Jonah, I see my face reflected back from the passages as if I'm looking into the clearest of mirrors. I like to think of Jonah as "Jonah Everyman", Jonah Everyperson, because I like to think that my tendency to 'run the other way' in obedience to God is commonplace. Every day I struggle with my physical self; a self who is very selfish, and has a strong tendency to run the other way — [Romans 7:14-25](#). (I pray that you are more obedient than me!)

⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

 The Queen of the South is also known as the Queen of Sheba. See [1 Kings 10:1-29](#) and [2 Chronicles 9:1-12](#). Scholars believe Sheba was a wealthy kingdom located in southern Arabia near modern-day Yemen.

Q22. ***The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it:***
What did "The men of Nineveh" do that will allow them to "stand . . . and condemn it"?

Q23. ***The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it:***
What did "The Queen of the South" do that will allow her to "rise . . . and condemn it"?

Q24. ***For the [men of Nineveh] repented at the preaching of Jonah:*** Both John the Baptist ([Matthew 3:2](#)) and Christ Jesus ([Matthew 4:17](#)) proclaimed, "Repent!". Why is repenting necessary?

Q25. (Speculation) ***The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it:*** Did "The Queen of the South" come to believe in God and did she repent?

Yes? Maybe? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q26. ***And now one greater than Jonah . . . Solomon is here:*** Who is the "one greater than Jonah"?

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Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

The Journey of an Evil Spirit

⁴³ "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.

Q27. *When an evil spirit comes out of a man:* What is another name for “evil spirit”?

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Q28. *When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places:* What might “arid places” represent?

.....

Psalm 63:1 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole-body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.

 In this commentator's view, “no water” and “arid places” represents people and regions in which there is no God, no worship, no Bible, no faith, no repentance, no Jesus. It is an “arid place” where no life-giving water can be found. Now, the appropriate question that should be asked, “Why did the demons find ‘no rest’?” The purpose in their evil lives is to prevent belief in Christ Jesus, belief in God. The demons are, therefore, quite bored in the “arid places” and desire the challenges of humans in more Jewish and Christian traditions; therefore, “no rest [in the] arid places”.

⁴⁴ Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.

Q29. *It finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order:* ① What is the purpose of an exorcism? ② When demons are driven-out, what takes the place of the demons? ③ Does the former human host return to ‘normal’? (‘Normal’ means the person is no longer under demon control – evil.)

① What is the purpose of an exorcism?

.....

② What takes the place of the demons?

.....

③ Does the human return to normal? Yes? Maybe? No? (Thoughts?)

.....

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⁴⁵ Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Q30. *Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself*: The demon finds the “house unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order”. The person who had the demon driven-out – what could he or she have done that would have defended the “house”?

Q31. *That is how it will be with this wicked generation*: To what does “this wicked generation” refer?

Q32. *Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself*: If our loved one(s) does not believe in the saving grace of Christ Jesus, ① what can we, who believe, do to protect our loved one from demonic influences? ② Sometimes the Lord may want us to learn a lesson, too. At what point do we decide our prayers are sufficient and we have to lean on our trust in the Lord to do what is best?

① What can we, who believe, do to protect?

② At what point do we decide our prayers sufficient?

Luke 18:1-8 [NIV-1984]

¹ Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ² He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. ³ And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

⁴ "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' "

⁶ And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Job 1:1, 6-10 [NIV-1984]

¹ In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. . . .

⁶ One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

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⁷ The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

⁸ Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

⁹ "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. ¹⁰ "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

 The prayer-lesson we can learn from the Job passage is this: ask God to erect a hedge of protection around your loved one! A hedge, an army tank, a barrier that Satan and his demons cannot penetrate, cannot go around, and cannot enter from the front, back, top, bottom, or sides.

Personally, I struggle with this. Why? My children are nonbelievers. I struggle with the question: do I want to keep my children safe from demonic influences? Or might God use those demonic influences to coax them to Jesus?

One of characteristics of love is trust. Do I love God? Does my love for God include trust. I am reminded of Psalm 56:3 (↓). I am also reminded of 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (↓) and 2 Peter 3:9 (↓).

We, who believe, are not promised an easy life. We, who believe, are not promised easy answers to life's challenges. We must carry-on in our belief and obedience, and trust that Christ Jesus will work out the details – *"may Your will be done"* ([Matthew 6:10](#)).

Psalm 56:3 [NIV-1984]

When I am afraid, I will trust in you.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 [New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

¹ First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made in behalf of all people, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 [NIV-1984]

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Ephesians 6:18 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

Pray in the Spirit at all times. Pray with all kinds of prayers, and ask for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready. Never give up. Always pray for all God's people.

Philippians 4:6 [New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

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Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

Jesus's Family

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

Q33. *His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him:* How would you describe the 'faith in Jesus' of Jesus's "mother and brothers"?

Strong? Lukewarm? Non-existent? Thoughts?

Mark 3:20-21, 31-35 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

[The Gospel of Mark provides additional details.]

²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." . . .

³¹ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.

³² And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers [and your sisters] are outside, seeking you."

³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!

³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Q34. *His mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him:* Why do you think Jesus's "mother and brothers" wanted to speak to Him?

Mark 6:1-3 [New Living Translation (NLT)]

[If the student is curious about the names of some of Jesus's step-brothers, see verse 3:]

¹ Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. ² The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

They asked, "Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?"

³ Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary [some manuscripts read: He's just the son of the carpenter and of Mary] and the brother of James, Joseph [or Joses], Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him.

Lesson 23: Matthew 12:31-50

 A few thoughts from this commentator on the names of the Apostles.

As we read Scripture, it sometimes becomes quite difficult to attribute a specific event to a specific Apostle, due to parents at the time choosing common names for their children. For example, Jesus chose a disciple named James, and one of His step-brothers is named James. And to make it even more confusing, we find a disciple name Thaddaeus, who is also called Jude or Judas, and this Thaddaeus/Judas is different than Judas Iscariot, and they both are different than Jesus's step-brother named Judas. And then Jesus invites Peter to become a disciple and then calls him Simon; along with another disciple named Simon, who is Simon the Zealot; and both are different than Jesus's step-brother Simon. My head starts to spin!

Generally, the step-brother of Jesus named James (Mark 6:3 ↑) is identified as a leader in the Jerusalem Church. So, through Jesus's later ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, step-brother James became a passionate Believer in Jesus's ministry and a leader in Jesus's Church.

As told in [Acts 15](#), when the Apostle Paul arrives in Jerusalem, he tells of his ministry's successes and hardships, and solicits the Church leadership's position on whether it is sufficient for Believers to follow the Gospel of Christ Jesus; or must Believers follow the Gospel PLUS Jewish law, including circumcision. Step-brother James takes the leadership initiative ([Acts 15:13-21](#)) and provides the solution. Additionally, Step-brother James wrote the Book of James (in the New Testament).

God does not want us to get hung-up on trying to associate a specific act to the name of a specific disciple. The important concept for us to remember is that these events occurred, and they were either performed or witnessed by actual people, who had actual jobs, actual living arrangements, actual tax obligations, and in some cases actual families (i.e., Simon Peter in [Matthew 8:14-15](#); [Mark 1:29-31](#); [Luke 4:38-39](#)). While names provide credibility to the narrative, their names are incidental to the profound nature of Jesus's teachings and miracles.

⁴⁸ He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Q35. ***Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers:*** Is Jesus disregarding His family? Or is He radically expanding His definition of family to include all who believe?

Disregarding? Expanding? Thoughts?

Q36. ***Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers:*** What words does Jesus say that identifies His "brother and sister and mother"? (Hint: see verse 50.)

Ephesians 1:5 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

And before the world was made, God decided to make us his own children through Jesus Christ. That was what he wanted and what pleased him.

Q37. ***For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven:*** What word describes this concept?

 O B D I C

Lesson 23: Matthew 12:31-50

Q38. (**Personal** not to be discussed in a group) *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother:* Upon self-examination, do you consider yourself Jesus's "brother [or] sister [or] mother"?

Brother? Sister? Mother?

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